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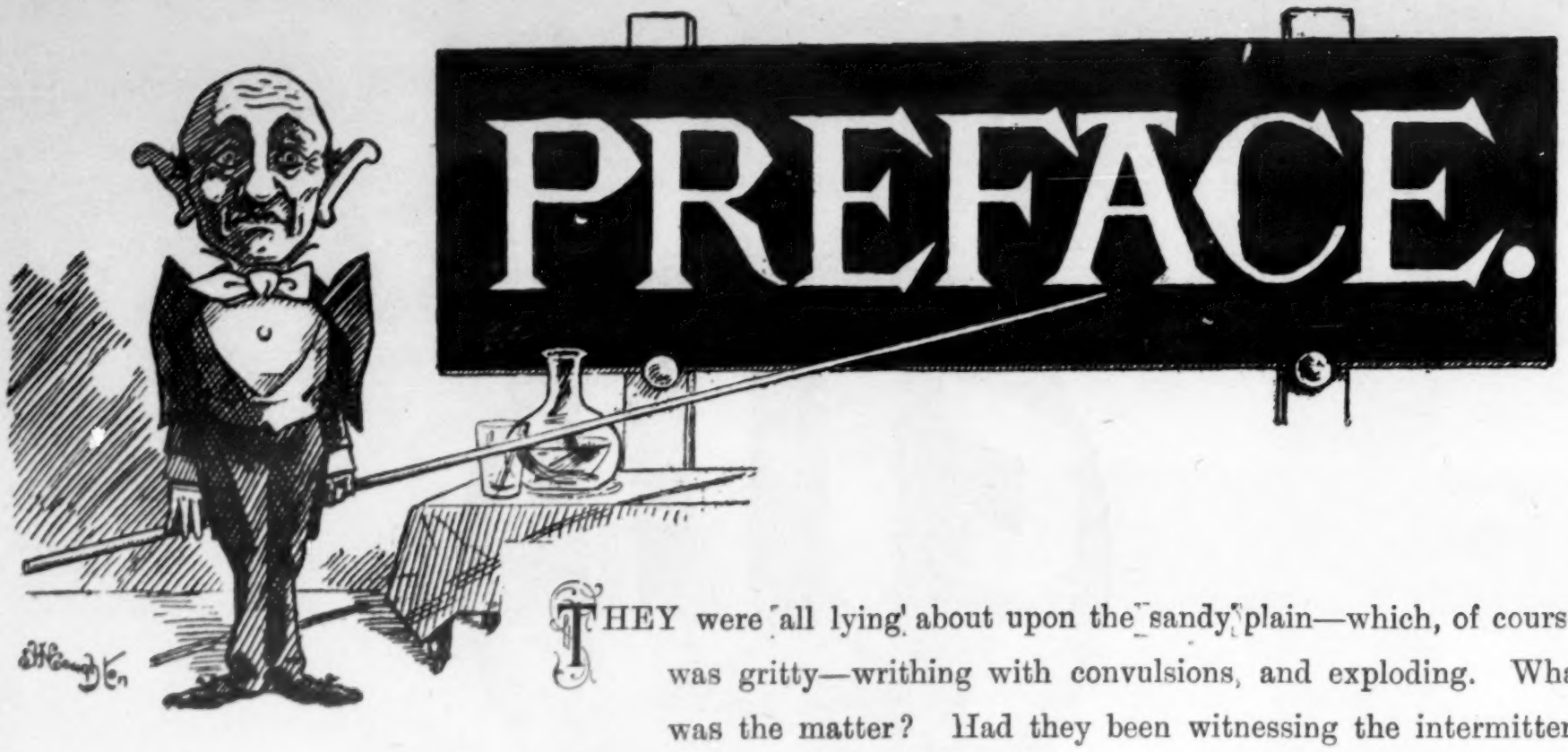


PREFACE.

THEY were all lying about upon the sandy plain—which, of course, was gritty—writhing with convulsions, and exploding. What was the matter? Had they been witnessing the intermittent procession of Motor-cars, with their attendant exudations of fumes malodorous? Were they overcome with the revelations resulting from the alleged economical culinary Department located in Spring Gardens; or prostrated with the vituperative eloquence of the *burning* apostle of the so called sacred cause of Labour? Had they been offered a trip to the Shaftesbury Training Ship, spiced with a promise of extra meat rations? No; it was none of these. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.*

The passage of the Nile had been forced, and Sir Herbert Kitchener had been enabled to proceed to Dongola.

Who—and with what weapon—had caused this paralysis and sudden inability amongst the Dervishes? They had hitherto stubbornly and ferociously resisted the progress of the Khedive's Army.

The strange fact prevailed. All those *hors de combat* had had the stuffing knocked out of them in precisely the same manner. Their sides were split.

Sir Herbert looked about for an explanation. He presently caught sight of a tall figure, attired in cap and and bells and gaily-hued apparel, approaching.

Mutual recognition was instantaneous.

"You here, FUN!" exclaimed Sir Herbert.

"I am everywhere," was the response of the Prince of Jesters.

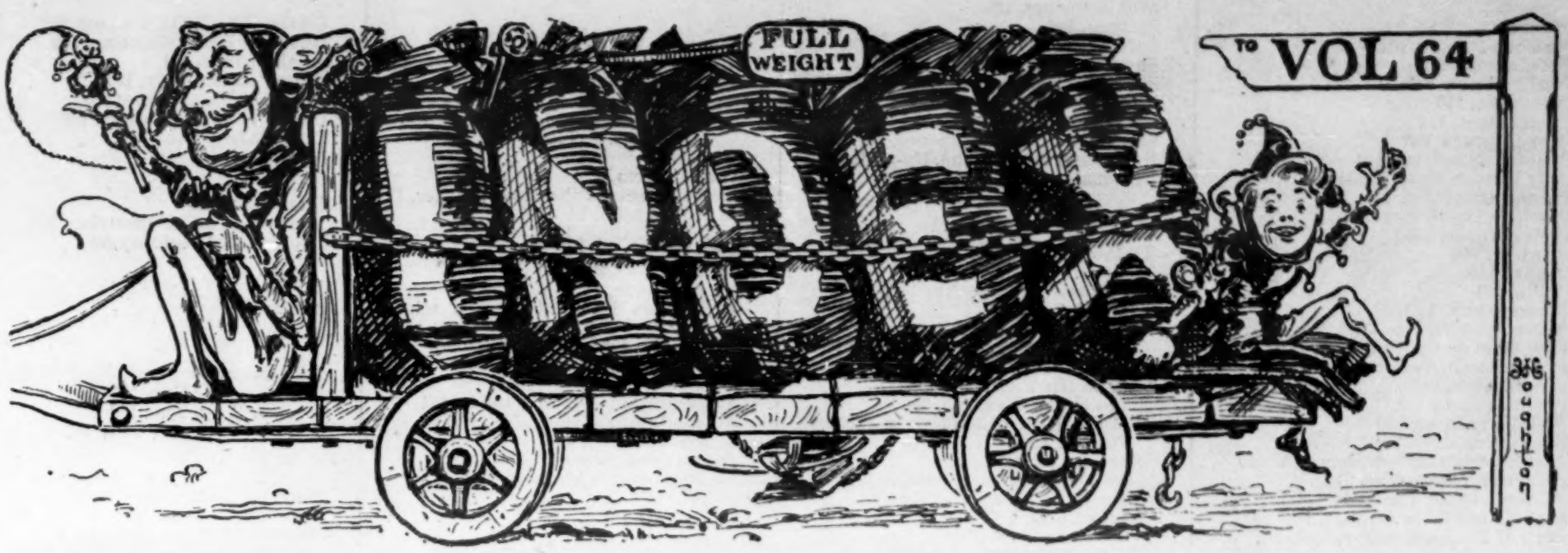
"True," acknowledged Sir Herbert. Then he inquired of FUN whether he could explain how it was that the defunct Dervishes had their sides split. Did he know?

"The splitting is easily explained," said FUN. "They exploded. You could hear them bursting with laughter as far as Khartoum, where you must push on to presently, and avenge Gordon."

"Quite so; we mean to," responded Sir Herbert. "But what made these Dervishes burst?" persisted the Modern Fire-range.

"Bless you!" said FUN, "they split their sides over this"—and he handed his strategic young friend

THE SIXTY-FOURTH VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES OF "FUN."



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